

PERSPECTIVES OF HEARING PARENTS AND THEIR DEAF CHILDREN: EXPLORING NEEDS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN IPOH, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

As deafness is an invisible disability, early intervention is crucial for the development of a deaf child. In Malaysia, policies are established, and various forms of support are also provided for families and their deaf children. However, the usefulness and effectiveness of these initiatives for hearing parents and their deaf children have largely not been explored, and feedback from both parents and the deaf on these implementations remains limited. This study's objective is to explore both hearing parents and their deaf adult children's perceived needs and support received from the government. Six pairs of hearing parents and their deaf adult children were interviewed to explore their life experiences in raising a deaf child or growing up deaf in Ipoh, as well as the resources and support they received. Using thematic analysis, the results of the study revealed an overarching theme of *the need for continuous support* in four areas: awareness of needs, deaf-friendly communications, support for financial independence, and holistic education. These themes revealed participants' perceptions of the needs and support required, in addition to the existing resources provided. This led to a discussion on the perception of needs and support systems from two different perspectives and the implementation of policies according to the welfare and social models, revealing the complexity of the deaf community's situation. Although participants' narratives are retrospective, the results of the study provide insight into the current situation faced by this community in Ipoh. Future research may consider extending the exploration of the deaf community's needs in different contexts, such as the deaf community in urban areas, other states in Malaysia, and deaf communities of other races or socioeconomic status.

Keywords: Deafness, Lived Experience, Malaysia, Perceived Needs, Thematic Analysis.